

Word Pictures Part Two: Creating Word Pictures

Move beyond "everyday words" and use word pictures in your communication with your spouse. In their book, *The Language of Love*, Dr. Gary Smalley and Dr. John Trent describe a communication style to convey better insight and understanding to your spouse.

This method is called "emotional word pictures" and is defined as "a communication tool that uses a story or object to activate simultaneously the emotions and intellect of a person. In so doing, it causes the person to experience our words, not just hear them."

Seven Steps to Creating a Word Picture

1. Establish a Clear Purpose. Have clear in your mind what message you want to convey when creating your word picture. Do you want to clarify feelings, move to a deeper level of intimacy, encourage your spouse, or lovingly correct them?
2. Carefully Study the Other Person's Interests. Know what interests your spouse so that you can use an illustration that will best capture their attention.
3. Draw from Four Inexhaustible Wells. If you are concerned about not being creative enough to form your own word picture, Smalley and Trent suggest four sources of inspiration: nature, everyday objects, imaginary stories and your own experiences.
4. Rehearse Your Story. While it's not practical to write down or practice every word picture you use, but Smalley and Trent do recommend thinking through your stories before using them.
5. Pick a Convenient Time without Distractions. Choose a time to share your word picture with your spouse when there aren't distractions or time constraints. Know your spouse and when they are most likely to be attentive to you.
6. Try and Try Again. Smalley and Trent encourage readers to continue this communication method, even if it is not as effective as hoped the first time used.
7. Milk Your Word Picture for All It's Worth! Use a basic word picture to bring several levels of feelings to the surface.

Examples of Word Pictures

Smalley and Trent provide 101 examples of word pictures as the final chapter in their book. A few examples are provided below. Once you understand the concept, try using the steps above to create your own.

* "I feel my life is as boring as a VCR tape on constant rewind -- the same thing gets played over and over again. At times like that, I want to fast forward to the end and put in a tape with a new job, new house, and new car."

I know I can be a roaring flame of enthusiasm, but my wife often hoses me off with her words, and I wind up a dying ember. If she would only fan the fire with some encouraging words or a tender hug when I get home from work, I'd burn as brightly as ever."

* "Your love is to me what going to McDonald's is to the kids -- especially when they get to order all the chocolate shakes and French fries they can eat!"

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